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THE NEWS BULLETIN

OF THE

NEAR EAST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

"... From Iran to Morocco, from Turkey to the Sudan, . . ."

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Easter Tide 1959

THE NEWS BULLETIN OF THE NEAR EAST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

EASTERTIDE 1959

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Center Folio

Easter in the Holy Land

(Pictures in courtesy of the American Bible Society)

Co-Editors

Harry G. Dorman Jr.
P.O. Box 235
Beirut, Lebanon

Donald R. MacNeill
P.O. Box 80
Kuwait

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The Sentences of Easter

For God so loved the world,
That He gave
His only begotten Son
That whoever believes on Him shall not
perish, but have everlasting life.

The God of Peace
that brought again from the dead
our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood
of the everlasting covenant,
make us perfect in every good work
to do his will,
working in us
that which is well-pleasing in his sight;
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

OTTO F. A. MEINARDUS

Drawn to a Desert

**** Otto Meinardus, a professor at the American University in Cairo, shares his insights on a pilgrimage to a Coptic monastery in the desert.**

"Life in a religious order is always life in the desert. Men are drawn to deserts, for there they meet God face to face."

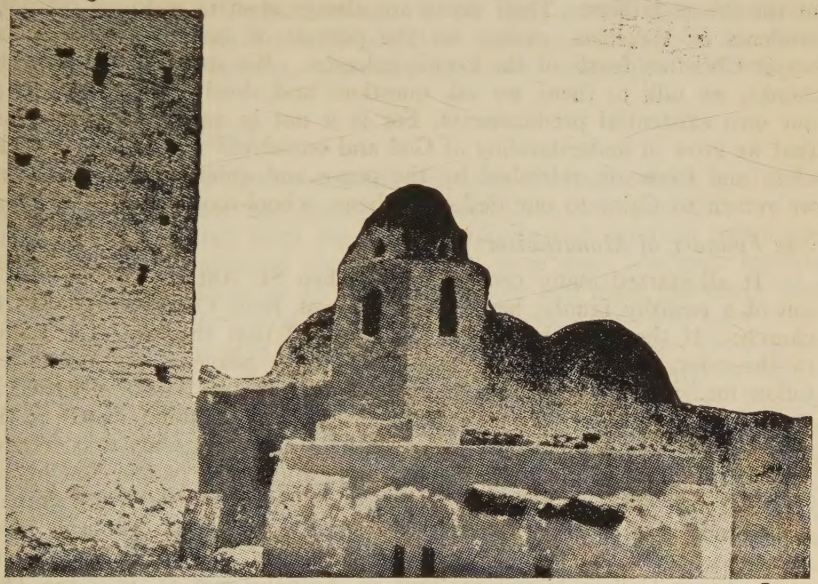
Thomas Merton in 'The Silent Life"

What is it that attracts all kinds of people to visit the desert monasteries of the Western and Eastern deserts of Egypt? "Almost every time I return to Egypt I make it a point to visit with the monks of the Wadi 'n Natroun," says the Danish Ambassador to Egypt. "Let us go and see where St. Anthony lived and overcame his temptations," and so a group of Americans ventured to the Mount of Colzoum to visit the Dair Anba Antonius and the cave of the Great Hermit.

The number of visitors to the once isolated desert monasteries has greatly increased in the past thirty years. The monasteries are set down now on the fringe of the lay and the unascetic; a few gallons of petrol separate it from golf courses and maisons de coiffure. Each year the silence around the monasteries is more broken, and inevitably each succeeding visitor is of less importance. There was a time when the camel was the only means by which the monasteries could be reached. Mechanization of transport and the construction of roads are no doubt important reasons that have made individual and group pilgrimages and tours so much more convenient. Twenty-five years ago it took the visitor five days to reach the Dair Anba Antonius from Cairo. Today popular Egyptian magazines impress upon their urban readers the possibility of spending a week-end where at one time the hermit sought to be left undisturbed. "Une excursion pour votre Week-End: Les Monastères de la Mer Rouge!" According to the most recent visitors' books literally hundreds of people have visited the convents of the Wadi 'n Natroun and those of the Red Sea desert. The camel caravan has been replaced by jeeps and trucks, and the day will not be far distant when helicopters or other mechanized birds of the sky will disturb the peace and the quietness that surround the Coptic desert monasteries.

Drawn to the Desert

Apart from curiosity and the sight-seeing complex, there are those who are attracted to the desert because of the life they lead and the job they have. May it not be the neurotic character of our times, the haste and the speed that has driven literally thousands of urban dwellers to find an hour or two of peace? Every year, groups from churches in Cairo follow the path that centuries ago was taken by saints, martyrs and pilgrims.



A Coptic Monastery

The Maadi Community Church, an overseas congregation associated with the Department of Overseas Union Churches of the NCCCUSA, has organized a number of pilgrimages and tours to these monasteries. "It is a strange life that these monks lead here in the desert, but isn't the peace, the quietness, just wonderful?" No doubt this is one reason that attracts businessmen, diplomatic personnel and others to the Wadi 'n Natroun.

The convoy of cars meets early in the morning at the church to proceed to the resthouse on the Cairo-Alexandria road. From there we turn to the small village of Wadi 'n Natroun, where many years ago an Englishman named Hooker established a Salt and Soda Company. A few more miles and we have reached the desert; the cars can go no

further and have to be parked under a palm tree. On the horizon are the desert monasteries of Anba Bishoi and that of the Syrians. We walk for about forty minutes and stand in front of the majestic twelve meter-high walls of the monastery. We ring the bell and the gate-keeper bids us welcome. The gateway is large and imposing, but the door itself is small. We assemble at the guesthouse, a rather recent construction in Levantine style, and after a prayer and a reading from Palladius' *Paradise of the Fathers*, one of the fathers adds a few words of general instruction. We visit the churches, the library, the refectory, the garden, the keep, the new agricultural projects and are deeply moved by the hospitality of the desert fathers. Their doors are always open to welcome pilgrims, students or travellers, except for the periods of fasting preceding the major Christian feasts of the Coptic calendar. We spend a day with the monks, we talk to them, we ask questions and slowly become aware of our own existential predicaments. For is it not in and through contrast that we grow in understanding of God and ourselves? Rejuvenated by the clean and fresh air, refreshed by the peace and quietness of the desert, we return to Cairo to our desks, kitchens, school-rooms and workshops.

The Founder of Monasticism

It all started many centuries ago, when St. Anthony of Korma, a son of a wealthy family, heard the saying of Jesus Christ being read in church: "If thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." (Mt. 19:21) And so he gave away all he had and settled in a cave on the banks of the river Nile. Dair el Maimun, which is the name of the village about 120 km. south of Cairo, was his first retreat. But as he grew in fame and popularity, and more people sought his blessings, St. Anthony withdrew to the inner desert of the Wadi Arabah, where today, after 1600 years, the Monastery of Anba Antonius gives witness to the founder of Christian monasticism. It was in the regions of the South Gallala Mountains that St. Anthony met St. Paul the Theban in whose honour and memory the Monastery of Anba Boula was established. St. Antony's influence upon the church was significant indeed. The founder of monasticism in the desert of Scetis, Anba Macarius, and his collegue, Anba Ammon, as well as Hilarion, the originator of Palestinian monasticism, were inspired by the great saint.

And Into the World

It might be well at this time to call to our minds the influence of Coptic monasticism upon the ecumenical church. St. Jerome and Paula as well as Rufinus and Melania are reported to have visited the Mount of Nitria. Cassianus found a monastery in Marseilles where the Egyptian rule was followed and it is more than likely that prior to the first preach-

ing of the Gospel by Augustine, the Egyptian monastic rule prevailed in England. At any rate seven Coptic monks are buried in Disert Ulidh in Ireland. St. Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea and founder of many monastic institutions, derived his knowledge from the famous desert saints of Egypt whom he had visited. Anba Aragawi, who is said to have received his habit from Anba Pachomius, founded the celebrated Monastery at Debra Damo. With him came eight other monks of the order of St. Anthony and together they are known in the Ethiopian Church as the "Nine Saints." The founder of Christian monasticism in Mesopotamia was Anba Awgin, an Egyptian pearl-fisher who had worked at Suez and then entered a Coptic convent. In the early middle ages, Armenians, Ethiopians and Syrians established their national convents in the desert of the Wadi 'n Natroun, a cosmopolitan and ecumenical gathering of desert fathers.

And Upon the Church

The impact of Coptic monasticism upon the local church is of greatest significance, for the bishops, metropolitans and patriarchs of the church are recruited from the desert. Solitude and mystical communion with God are considered more important than pure academic learning. However, it is interesting to notice that more and more university graduates have recently joined the desert fathers, young men who have chosen the wilderness, the cave or the desert cell as their *summum bonum* in life. Here are the words of one of the young leaders of the hermit or solitary life, a man who served as the prototype for many university students. After having received his B.Sc. degree in pharmacy, Abouna M. joined the desert fathers to live for several years in a cave miles away from civilization and any kind of community life. Like Macarius the Great, sixteen hundred years ago, he preferred the wilderness to the coenobitic-monastic life. To-day he lives in a small monastery in the Libyan desert some sixty kilometers from the nearest village.

"Here I feel I can live the life of the true ascetic and solitary. It is here where we come closest to the way our fathers used to live. We are poor, like our fathers. We have no library, yet our books are written in our minds to serve our minds, and religion, which is the life with God, the true philosophy, comes from the heart to serve the heart. Thus we don't need a library; our library is within us; our hearts contain the library of God."

These then are the words of the real mystic, a type in our Christian religious experience that has almost vanished. That he is not the only young and well educated monk is evident from recent statistics that show an ever increasing number of B.A.'s and B.Sc.'s joining the monasteries. Their contribution to the ancient monasteries is a significant one

indeed, both in terms of scholarship and motivation.

It was an overwhelming experience to visit a cave several miles from the nearest monastery and meet a solitary who used to be a teacher. There, in the fullest harmony with God, he was engaged in compiling a catalogue for a reference work in the field of Coptology, using all the modern scientific equipment for his scholarly task. It is there where we can find the new spirit that can contribute so much to the ancient Church of St. Mark.

And Today

Today the Coptic Church is a member of the World Council of Churches. It is characteristic indeed for the church to select as one of its three delegates to the WCC a desert monk, a person who since 1954 has represented the church at ecumenical gatherings in America, Hungary, Germany and Denmark. One cannot help but be reminded of a certain Abouna Yohannes el Antony, the abbot of the Monastery at Mount Colzoum who in 1439 was delegated by the patriarch to represent the Coptic Church at the Council of Florence.

The number of the desert monasteries as well as the number of monks has steadily decreased over the centuries. Whereas in the fifth and sixth century thousands of monks inhabited the monasteries of Egypt, today only a few hundred monks live in the eight inhabited convents of the Eastern and Western desert and in the Nile valley. Four of these monasteries are located in the famous desert of Scetis, the Wadi 'n Natroun which the motorist passes on his way from Cairo to Alexandria. These are the Monasteries of Abu Makar, Anba Bishoi, that the Syrians and the Monastery of Baramous. In the Red Sea desert are the two Monasteries of Anba Boula and Anba Antonius, while south of the Fayyum is the Monastery of St. Samuel. In the Nile Valley in the vicinity of Assiut is situated the largest and most prosperous of the Coptic convents, the Dair el Muharraq.

Once miles away from civilization and visited only by pious pilgrims, bibliophiles huming for manuscripts, or scholars studying wall paintings and stucco ornaments, most of the monasteries to-day are quite easily accessible by car. And entering them with the right attitude and right kind of spirit can prove to be a blessing not easily forgotten.

MARJORIE J. DYE

Experiment in Writing

****Marjorie Dye is one of the creative forces behind Literacy House in Minia, Egypt.**

During the first week in July, 1958, the Writers' Fellowship for Simple Arabic Literature held a conference at the Evangelical Camp, Agamy, Alexandria. This Fellowship is a group which meets about four times a year at the Literacy House, Minia, to study the art of simple writing. This was an experimental conference, the first of its kind to be held in Egypt.. Its purpose was to stimulate new thought and to train the group in the difficult art of writing for new literates. As in any conference for writers, much of the benefit came simply from being together with others who are interested in writing. Most of the group are pastors and wives of pastors, and they are finding this new type of service very rewarding, as they help prepare books that will help build up their village churches. The total attendance was about 20 men and women.

The program as planned by Rev. Samuel Habib was along the lines of a workshop. Each morning after breakfast the group met together for prayers and a devotional service. After this, each writer found a quiet place where he could work on his individual assignment. One was given the task of simplifying a story about Simon Peter which had proved popular with the villagers, but too difficult for most of the new literates. Another simplified a booklet on pure water. One translated a booklet on hookworm and similar diseases which are common in the villages. The women worked on books about the care of children, cleanliness in the home, etc. Two worked together on the final version of a series of books on the Christian family, which was a project started by the Fellowship the previous winter. A group of three worked out a plan for revising the Primer which is used in the literacy campaigns.

This work period lasted until noon, when everyone stopped work and went down for a swim in the sea. After lunch and a rest period, work was resumed from four until six, each one again busy on his own assignment. There were no slackers, and some were so interested in what they were doing that they wrote during the rest period. Evenings were for relaxation, games, stunts, or sitting around the campfire listening to Arabic poetry. Then prayers, and to bed.

The Fellowship at work. The author, 2nd from right.

The immediate and visible fruits of the Conference were four books or booklets completed ready for the press and ten others partially finished. The more lasting fruits, we believe, will appear later in the lives of the village people for whom we are writing. We are planning now for a similar Writers' Conference to be held in the summer of 1959.

Thirteen Books of the World Christian Series have appeared in Arabic. The latest was the book of the hour :

One Lord One Church

All these are available at A.C.L.C. Publication Centres in Cairo & Beirut.

HASSAN DEHQANI-TAFTI

notes on INDIGENOUS CHURCH

****the author, a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Iran and pastor of St. Luke's Church in Isfahan, has recently written a book on his own spiritual pilgrimage, to be published under World Christian Books. Much has been said on 'indigenisation' and these Notes will produce necessary insights into the meaning of the Church.**

Whenever two or three are gathered together in Christ's Name in any particular native land, there the native or indigenous church has started. God ordinarily works through ordinary people and ordinary things: men and women in their own homes, at their own tasks of daily life and with their own idiosyncracies, customs, traditions, language and culture. These are called by God to respond to His love. Those who respond become part of His universal Church, and the indigenous Church of their country. There must first be an indigenous church for the Universal Church to have any meaning. Christianity must first become native to a soul and then native to a soil, and it is only after that process that there can be World Christianity.

I am not fond of the word 'indigenisation.' It rather gives the horrid idea of a group of people (missionaries usually) deciding to do something to some people in some area: For example, the way in which a group of technicians devote themselves for a year or two to the industrialization of an island like the Khark Island in the Persian Gulf. Indigenisation never happens like that. Indigenisation happens when indigenous people worship together the Lord Jesus Christ as their God in their own indigenous land. Therefore we must not worry about 'indigenisation', but we must work hard for evangelization. The importance must always be in depth, and not in numbers or statistics. We cannot measure faith by words, nor the strength of it by counting people. We may as well weigh people to see how many tons of Christianity we have! Depth is the real thing, and that we cannot measure. It is only after evangelization that we can help people to deepen their faith, so that they may not remain spiritual infants to the end of their lives.

The author

It is true that the Church of Christ is super-national and can never be herself if she is imprisoned in the narrow framework of nationalism. But it is also true that the church cannot be super-national, super-racial, and super-cultural, unless it first becomes national, racial and cultural. Trees are perhaps a good example here: Poplar trees are poplar trees wherever they grow, but they must have their roots in the soil of some specific location in order that they may be trees at all. The church must have its roots in the soil of some place before it can be called a church.

An indigenous church is not a church that is run only by national leaders, or is economically self-supporting. It has to have a character of its own, true to the Gospel of Christ and yet distinct from others. This cannot be merely imitated. It requires time, patience and depth of knowledge. It needs spirituality and love, both of one's own heritage and of the world at large, as well as a love of the Gospel. How is this to be reached in a young small church?

The Raw Materials of Growth

Every Christian must try and *find* himself. Each person, cleansed from selfishness and devoted to God, must *realize* himself. We must accept what we are in the natural order of things, and yet reject the sinful things. Our parentage, sex, language, colour, emotions and the psychological makeup of our personality we cannot change. These are the raw materials God has given us for the upbuilding of His Church in our own particular circumstance. It is of no use to rebel against what we are, trying to become something else.

Unfortunately in the life of the younger churches, the way is still that of superficial imitation of the foreigner, rather than a process of growing inwardly in grace. Some of this is inevitable. Christianity has been imported from the west. The west has been, and still is, very powerful, and has great influence in our countries. But this does not mean that we have to be hypnotised by the west, never trying to discover who we are in ourselves. In order to progress, one has to learn a western language, read western books, and learn western ways. This is all good and essential. I am not one of those who say that missionaries should not export their spiritual heritage along with the preaching of the Gospel. Truly such a thing is impossible. There is no 'pure' Gospel as such. It is always "the gospel according to..." But this does not mean that we of the younger churches ought to be merely imitators of others. We have to digest the best the west can give, read western classics, acquaint ourselves with western thoughts, but never stop there.

If we progress in our friendship with Jesus, He will lead us deeper and deeper into the depths of the meaning of the Cross, and there He will show us our real selves, as God meant us to be. There we can throw off our sin and all the burdens that so easily beset us and rise up as new creatures with all our talents and special gifts sharpened, never content to be merely imitators, but rather authentic individuals in the pilgrimage of faith.

One of the reasons why so many people leave the church after their baptism is that their faith does not go deep enough. They are fed up with their own surroundings. They are attracted to something new. They have accepted western ways, why not their religion? But it won't do. You can put a western hat on your head and call it an international headwear and be content, but things belonging

to the inner part of personality, the direction of intellect, emotion or will, you cannot imitate. If you do, sooner or later, you will be unhappy and want to throw it off. It is well to remember that a small Muslim convert church in a Muslim country is still rooted in a Muslim environment — politically, economically and, to a very large extent, culturally. The more the church grows and its members grow in Christ, the more they will contribute to the life of their Muslim community, although it is true that, as time goes on, they will eventually produce a distinctive culture. A truly indigenous church ought to influence the life of the nation in which it lives.

The Dynamic of Faith

One of the distinctive characteristics of the indigenous church is that to be as light in the darkness, as salt in otherwise decaying food. The darkness of this world is still very powerful and the decay very lamentable. Man today, and especially men of the Near East, truly find themselves standing on sand, constantly aware that the sand on which they have been standing for centuries is being swept away by different currents. One by one the old ways of life, the ancient traditions, and the honored customs and principles are falling from their revered positions and counted as nothing. People have nothing to stand on, nor to stand for. Often religion has been a tool in the hands of unscrupulous politicians, and, therefore, people have a deep-set suspicion of it. Trust is a very rare thing — trust in God or trust in one another. People do not seem to be serious about anything outside of themselves, and, therefore, they are only serious about themselves. Hopelessness prevails. Now the one thing needed for such a situation is a dynamic minority, with energy, life and a saving, hopeful gospel. If the indigenous church cannot save the situation, nothing else can. But God's risk has not been in vain and it will never be. He still calls very ordinary people to carry on His purposes with their own free will by His grace.

The Wages of Conscience

But, if the indigenous Church is going to act as the conscience of the country in which she is placed — and only an indigenous church can do that — she must be prepared to suffer persecution. As far as the church is in the world, persecution is inevitable. Whenever and wherever the church has tried to avoid persecution, it has been like salt that has lost its saltiness, and has proved good for nothing. This is true everywhere, but supremely true about the indigenous church in a non-Christian country. I do not want church members to develop a 'martyr's complex' in the Near East, and to go about inviting persecution, but I am absolutely sure that a follower of Jesus Christ must be ready and willing to act as His Master did, and suffer, when the occasion arises, in the way in which He suffered. Only then can he, as a member of the Church, discharge his responsibility. I am saying this, not only because it is one of the very clear statements of our Lord (St. John 16:33), but also because it is true to common sense. Whenever an issue comes up, the church should not choose the safest way, but the more Christlike way. Be sure — the way of Christ is usually the way of the Cross.

But Who Is Indigenous?

By an indigenous church is not meant a church with no foreigner in it. A church cannot be a Church, unless all its members, irrespective of race, nationality, language and culture, are equal.

Perhaps in the old days, the missionaries in some places regarded themselves as somewhat 'super beings.' It is very easy for the pendulum to swing to the other

extreme, and the national to consider himself as superior and the missionary as an appendix. A truly indigenous church is one in which the foreigner would feel most at home in worship, whether he be the missionary who has come to help, or a technician who has come to earn his living, or a diplomat who happens to serve in the country.

The Way of the Cross

Last but not least, an indigenous Church is a church in which a convert can feel at home. So much has been said about this subject of a home for converts that it has become almost a commonplace. And yet it is so important! I should be in error not to mention it at all. In this subject, there are things that we have to avoid and should avoid, and there are things that we cannot and must not avoid. We must help people to gain a true perspective. For example, a new convert is usually very shy of foreigners, if not actually suspicious of them. He has to be helped to see that in the Church of Christ there is no East nor West; we are all brothers. We must not sacrifice this great Christian principle in order to attract people. It is true that perhaps the greatest deterrent to the spread of the church is what has been also the cause of its beginnings in many countries, namely the western supremacy of the last century. The unfortunate effect of this lies in the mistaken notion that the way of the cross and the way of worldly power, material wealth, gigantic machines, and extraordinary inventions are one and the same. The Cross of Christ — the life of self-sacrifice and self-giving — has been surrounded often by a great number of its opposite principles. Therefore it has become extremely difficult for the eastern peoples to see the true Cross. And after all, what is Christianity but the way of the Cross? Because of this misunderstanding and, one might say, unconcious misrepresentation of Christianity, somehow the wrong people with the wrong motives have gathered around the churches, displacing the truly honest and sincere enquirer. The more sincere indigenous Christians there are in the church the more truly honest enquirers will be attracted to the church.

During the ten years in which I have been teaching enquirers and welcoming them into the church as their pastor, I have come to realize that, for them, an emotional home is almost as important as, say, giving them Bible lessons. Very few enquirers come because of their intellectual interest in comparative religion. Most of them want something new, and this something new is more than theories about God, sin and salvation. It is a longing for a new community in which they may find a new outlook on life in general — to know how to spend their leisure, whom to marry and how to bring up children and so on and so forth. If we remember that the enquirer is considering cutting himself, or herself, right out from his, or her, own community, we will realize the importance of this subject, and the subsequent duty of church members. The newcomer is not only spiritually changing his home, but he is both mentally and emotionally upset and shall remain so for a long time.

As I said before, culturally, economically and partially emotionally the newcomer will remain in a Muslim atmosphere. I feel sure that it is not our job to turn people against Islam. Islam is a culture, even more than a religion. Muslims who want to

follow Christ cannot rid themselves of all their heritage. No, we must live in that heritage and "baptise it into" Christ under His guidance (I Cor. 10:2), even as the Christians lived through the Greco-Roman culture and eventually changed it into something new. Our aim is not negative but positive. It is our privilege and duty to introduce the vital seed of the Gospel which will, after it takes root and grows, transform the soil of Islam. It is the introduction of the seed of the Gospel that produces the ferment of thought and life, eventually creating a new climate of existence. The Muslim background and the Christian seed will produce a distinctive Christian culture, contributing to a new and deeper understanding of the message of the Gospel.

One Church

If I were not a Christian, the worst stumbling block for me in my contact with the Church in the Near East would be the disunity of the Church. A church can never be the indigenous church of a country unless it is the *one* church of that country. As a matter of fact, our separated churches throughout the whole world are defective because they are 'separate.' It was a shock to me at the second World Conference of Christian Youth at Oslo in 1947 that all of the delegates could not share in the Lord's Supper together. This shook the very foundations of my faith. It is no use for one denomination to blame another. We are all under judgement. We have to realize that division is sin, and we all ought to be ashamed of it.

The one great hope is the ecumenical movement which, under God's guidance, has spread throughout the world. And yet the end of this movement is not merely joining the World Council of Churches and becoming one of its members. The World Council is not *One Church*. Its aim is merely to bring the churches together so that they may see their differences as well as their togetherness. From this point, they must step forward, following where their Lord guides, even as He prayed for them saying, "...that they all be one..." (St. John 17:21).

Many of the Schemes of Union are very heartening, but they do not come to churches overnight. They need years of preparation and humble men and women devoted to the truth of Union. They need a great deal of prayer, for Union, like most noble things in the long run, is the gift of God to His Church. Woe unto us if by lack of sympathy, knowledge and understanding, if because of our petty rivalries and jealousies, we delay the coming of this gift to His Church, which we, by means of our divisions, have made into our churches.

Our Lord gave few warnings, but one of these is clear and straightforward: "...Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe in me to stumble, it were better for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea" (St. Matthew 18:6). If we only knew what a difference it would make for a convert to join One Church in his country, rather than to be confronted with many churches, we would have taken heed of our Lord's warning long before this.

NADIM MAKDISI

On the air

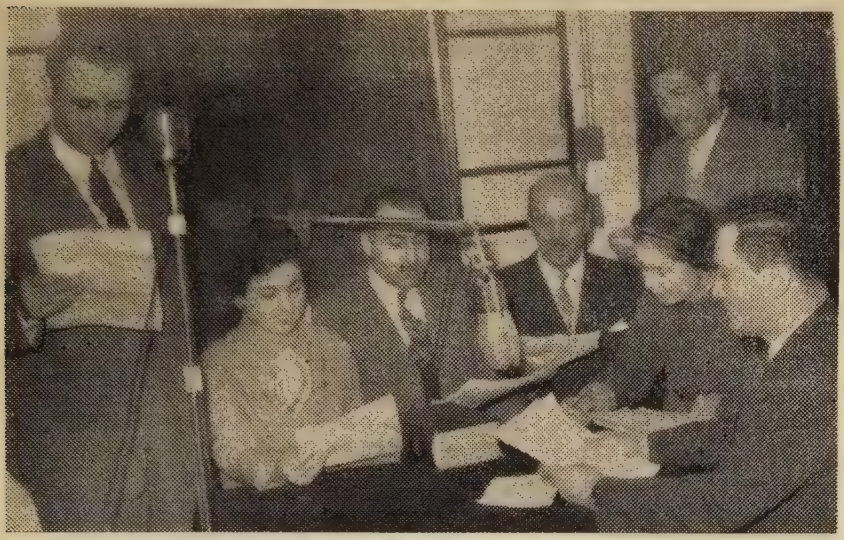
****This year has marked the appearance of N.E.C.C.'s. *Great Personalities of History* on the air-waves in Arabic. Its producer, and secretary of N.E.C.C. Radio-Audio-Visual Committee, speaks of this as the forerunner of even greater efforts.**

It was an important occasion to the eight men and women who gathered on the evening of last January six around a radio set. At seven-thirty sharp, silence reigned in the group as the announcer of the Lebanese Broadcasting Station said, "We now bring you the first of a new series of dramatic programs entitled, "FI MAWAKIB AN-NOUR" (In The Procession of Light). Each of these feature programs revolves on the life of one of the great men of history who has benefited our human race through his spiritual contributions to the march of civilization. Tonight's program is on the life of Beethoven, the deaf genius..."

As the program went on, unfolding scenes of Beethoven's meeting with Mozart, his poverty and struggle, and climaxing with his composition of the Missa Solemnis, a mixed feeling of pride and joy filled the hearts of the eight listeners; for this was their program and the voices they heard were their own. When it was all over, one of the group said, "Well, this is only the beginning. With His help, we shall do better every time."

Thus, In The Procession of Light, the latest radio program of the Audio-Visual Department of the Near East Christian Council was launched on the air. Its great success is attested by the fact that the Lebanese Station has requested and is now broadcasting two weekly programs instead of one. Every Tuesday evening at 7:30 P.M., (except in March when it is scheduled for 9:30 P.M.), a new program goes on the air. Every Saturday noon at 12:30, an old program is repeated. The programs released, so far, are in order of their broadcast: Beethoven, Samuel Morse, Michael Angelo, Al-Mutanabbi, Khalil Jubran (part one), Khalil Jubran (part two), Benjamin Franklin, Ibn Khaldoun, and Tennyson. Scheduled for broadcast are programs on Livingstone, Mozart, Handel, a meeting in Eternity between St. Augustine, Al-Ghazali, and Tolstoy, and Thomas Edison. The agreement with the Lebanese Broadcasting Station is for a series of programs to continue throughout 1959.

Since the launching of "In The Procession of Light," other stations in the Arab World, as well as foreign stations with Arabic transmissions, have expressed interest in the new program. Negotiations are going on with some of them and it is hoped that before long they will be using it.



Some of the announcers of the "In the Procession of Light" series during one of the recording sessions.

An explanation of the nature of our new program, its purpose and message, is deemed necessary at this juncture. Perhaps it would be better to state first what it is not. "In the Procession of Light" is not a religious program in the purest meaning of the word religion. The NECC Audio-Visual Department turns out purely religious programs ("From The World of Spirit") which are heard by thousands over Radio-Lebanon every Sunday afternoon. Our new program is better classified as a spiritual drama. In almost every feature presentation, there is embodied a Christian message. For example, the Beethoven program builds up to Beethoven's composition of the Missa Solemnis and the spiritual drive which made him write his masterpiece. Similarly, the Handel program leads up to the composition of the "Messiah." The Jubran Khalil Jubran programs are centered on his book, "Jesus, the Son of Man." The Tennyson program evolves on "In Memoriam" and its classical spiritual message. In other words, "In the Procession of Light" is an indirect attempt to infuse Christian ethics and Christian thought into the non-Christian masses in the Arab World.

There are two reasons why we have resorted to this indirect approach. First, we have found out that our purely religious programs have a limited number of listeners, almost all of them Christians and, in the main, Protestants. No matter how good our presentation is, only a few non-Christians would listen to a Christian program put out by a Christian organization. Since the Christians in the Arab World are but a small minority, "From The World Of Spirit" is reaching only a limited number of listeners. On the other hand, "In the Procession of Light" is heard by many thousands and, according to officials of the Lebanese Broadcasting Station, is now their most popular program.

The second reason is that radio stations in the Arab World and foreign stations with Arabic transmissions are not willing to use Christian programs presented by Christian organizations. Exception to this rule is the Lebanese Broadcasting Station which gives limited time to each denomination for its purely religious programs. Other stations allow Christian programs only on special occasions like Christmas and Easter.

We are encouraged to report that press comments on "In the Procession of Light" have been most favorable. Al-Jareedah, a leading Beirut daily, has acclaimed it as the most successful radio program in many years. An-Nahar, another Beirut daily, is publishing features of the programs on the days of transmission. The official monthly bulletin of the Lebanese Radio Station is giving our program more publicity than any other program.

Ever since "In The Procession of Light" went on the air, there has been a growing demand from schools, as well as church and civic organizations, for copies of the programs. In order to meet this demand, the Audio-Visual Department of the N.E.C.C. is now planning with several schools to rotate the programs to them on a weekly basis. The idea, is to play these programs to the students during the morning chapel or assembly.

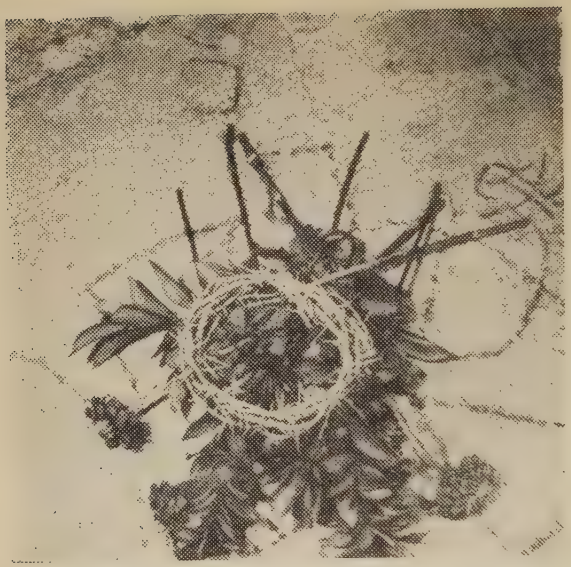
A recent survey by UNESCO puts the total adult illiterates at 700 million, or about 44 per cent of the world population 15 years old and over. Dr. Luther Evans, director general of UNESCO, writes, "The race between population growth and the extension of literacy has produced a paradox in certain regions, where there has been a reduction in the rate of adult illiteracy but an increase in the total number of illiterates."

from the *New York Times.*

Easter in the Holy Land

It is the high feast ....
in haste the whole world is going up to Jerusalem ...
For here in Jerusalem,
the event that transfigured history occurred ....
.... and men and women are still drawn to that garden,
that judgment hall, that *Via Dolorosa*,
there to behold His crucifixion, for the redemption of the world,
and to share, with Mary of Magdala, the pathos at
that moment, when an empty tomb, echoed ....
He is not here.

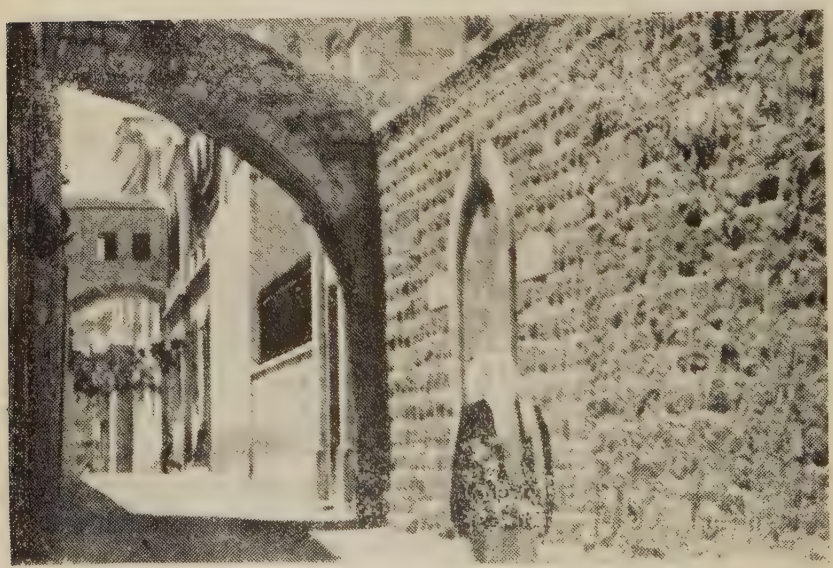
"When Jesus had spoken those words, he went forth with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden."



"Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him; And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and put it on his head."

"So they took Jesus and he went out carrying his cross"

(Via Dolorosa)

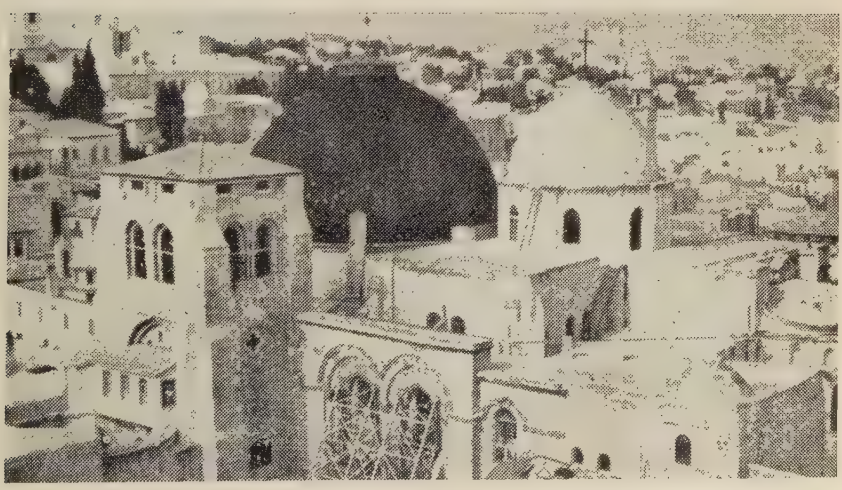


"Now in the place, there was a garden"

(The Garden Tomb)

"I have seen the Lord"

(The Church of the Holy Sepulchre)



For, in Jerusalem, on the dawn of this day,
with the triumphant assurance of faith,
we hear the words, and know,

"He is risen. as He said"

"For thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ
to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day ;
And that repentence and remission of sins should be
preached in his name among all nations,
beginning at Jerusalem,
And you are witnesses of these things."

MICHAEL WILKINSON

the Church of Armenia
A BRIEF History

****Michael Wilkinson, a former editor of the Bulletin, reviews the life of the Church of Armenia.**

A Church, like everything else, must have a name. In the majority of cases in the Near East, there is some geographical and doctrinal indication in the title, for example, the Syrian Orthodox Church. There is today an Armenian Catholic Church and an Armenian Evangelical Church, but the ancient Church of Armenia is content with the simplicity of her name. It is true that the Tsars of Russia tried to enforce some more precise description, and for some time in Russia, the word *Loosavorchaken* was in use. This word is found in the records of Etchmiadzin and roughly means "Illuminatorian", thus implying the connection with St. Gregory the Illuminator. This name has never been popular with Armenians, whose proud boast it is that Christianity was established among their people many years before St. Gregory. The Roman Church, claiming Gregory as a saint in her own calendar and refusing to allow any Church to be called after one of her own saints, has coined for her own use the term *Etchmiadznakan,* but this also does not find favour with most of the Armenians. The name *Ooghapar* (Orthodox) might be acceptable, but "Gregorian" certainly is not. We shall then speak of the Armenian Church or the Church of Armenia.

Tradition of Origin

A primitive and unvarying tradition claims apostolic origin for the Church through St. Bartholomew and St. Thaddeus, the first Illuminators of Armenia. This tradition is not, of course, documented, but may fairly be compared with the association of St. Peter with Rome and the association of St. Thomas with India. It is certain that Armenia was the first state to accept Christianity as its official religion, though pagan customs survived for many years in the mountains. It is noteworthy that Tertullian, writing in the second century of the Christian era, and quoting the passage in Acts ii, which enumerates the countries whose languages were heard on the day of Pentecost, omits Judaea and inserts in its place, Armenia. It is at least geographically appropriate that in the list Armenia should come between Mesopotamia and Cappodocia.

Anybody traveling in the Near East in any town where there is an Armenian community will notice the frequency with which the name "Krikor" occurs in shop signs. "Krikor" is Gregory, and the modern Armenians are proud to baptise their children with the name Gregory, the Illuminator par excellence. He was consecrated bishop in the year 302 and died in 325, the year of the Council of Nicaea. It was in his time that Armenia became a Christian country in fact as well as in name. In the early centuries of Christian history, it was inevitable that churches should be grouped by nation and language. The Armenian Church, though well provided for in the matter of hierarchy and administration, was at a grave disadvantage because she had no alphabet and no written language. Scholars were sent to the schools of Caesarea and Edessa where Greek and Syriac respectively were the languages used as a medium of instruction. There was in the Church a special order of "translators", but this oral instruction by itself obviously left much to be desired. The beginnings of Armenian literature are due to St. Sahak (Isaac) who completed his full jubilee as patriarch (387-439), and St. Mesrop, who had formerly been secretary to the king. In making Armenian for the first time a written language, they used thirty-six letters, and two additional letters were later added. The translation of the Bible was completed in the year 433, and the service books were then taken in hand. The Armenian liturgy is based on that of St. Basil, but it is no slavish imitation. St. Gregory had already made free use of national customs, and had adapted to Christian use, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, some pagan rites.

Geography and History

The geographical position of Armenia has been her misfortune, and her history tells of oppression and persecution alternating with periods of tolerance, that was at best only partial. She was too near the borders of the Roman empire, and when the Persians invaded, they tried to enforce Zoroastrianism on the people. The country was indeed a highway for the invader, and was ruled, at different times, by the Persians, the Greeks, the Saracens and the Tartar hordes. Whichever power held the major part of her territory ruled Armenia. In this struggle for survival it was inevitable that politics and religion should become inextricably intermingled. The conquerors made promises in plenty, and in response the Armenians would make some political concessions, but when there was a danger of compromising the essentials of their faith, there was immediate resistance. In the year 633, for instance, the Emperor Heraclius, wishing to strengthen the tottering frontier of his empire, worked for a

union between the Greek and the Armenian Churches. The Armenian Patriarch at the time was inclined to accept the Emperor's formula and there was actually a mass in which Greeks and Armenians joined. This compromise in the cause of peace so angered the Armenian people that it was immediately repudiated, and to this day, as a mark of disgrace, the name of that Patriarch is recorded in the Patriarchal Roll with the initial inverted.

The terrors of invasion were the cause of wholesale migrations. In some cases, the Armenians lost their identity completely and became assimilated to the people among whom they dwelt. In other cases, they found that they only exchanged one taskmaster for another. During one disturbed period, when the powers were jockeying for position in the Near East, the headquarters of the Armenian Church were repeatedly changed. Dwin, Cilicia, the island of Aghthamar on Lake Van and Etchmiadzin all play their part in the grim record. The Patriarchate was established at Etchmiadzin by 1441 and in that year was able to hold a General Synod which was attended by seven hundred persons. The Catholicate of Cilicia dates also from this date.

Craftsmen and Diplomats

Wherever the Armenians have gone they have been a civilizing influence. They have held administrative posts, and, as merchants and craftsmen, they have shown that ability for which they are still famed. When the great Shah Abbas of Persia wanted to make Isfahan the beautiful city that it is today, he moved a colony of Armenians down to Julfa to do much of the skilled work. Since the days of the pioneer missionary, Mary Bird, that Armenian colony has maintined valuable contacts with the Church Missionary Society working in the area. In the Ottoman Empire, and especially in Constantinople, Armenians held high posts and showed that attention to detail of which the Turks in the old days were not capable.

In 1461 the Sultan, who had already established the Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople with civil jurisdiction and privileges, gave similar honours and privileges to an Armenian Patriarch. Thus he recognized the two great families of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, a recognition based, not on race or nationality, but on faith — the Greek Orthodox coming under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch, while the monophysites were subject to the Armenian Patriarch.

It was in Constantinople that the partisans of the Roman Church were most active, working under the patronage of the French Ambassadors and others. Eventually in the nineteenth century the Turks established a community which went under the name of *Katolik* and included all adherents of the Roman Church who were Turkish citizens

without distinction of race and ritual. The Protestant community, or millet, followed this in 1847.

After Sorrow

But the days of cruel oppression were by no means a thing of the past. The Turks massacred the Armenians in 1894-1896, in 1909 and during the first World War, their numbers were sadly reduced. Survivors were dispersed in other countries of the Near East, in Greece, in France and in the Americas. There was another exodus in 1939 when the French ceded Cilician territory, now known as Hatay, to the Turks. This drove 25,000 Armenians to Syria and Lebanon.

In the meantime the Catholicate of Cilicia was established at Antelias near Beirut in premises that had been occupied by the Near East Relief Committee in their work for Armenian orphans. Despite some internal discord between competing parties in the church, Antelias is a hive of activity with a theological seminary and a considerable literary output.

The outward appearance of Armenian Churches is familiar to every traveller. The Turks forbade the use of domes in their architecture. In consequence the shape of the cupola is narrowed down to a point and recalls the shape of the headgear of the clergy. The interior seems to be marked by an austere simplicity when compared with buildings of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The altar is exposed to view and not concealed by a screen. Above it there is a picture of the Virgin and Child, and other pictures may be substituted at the Feasts of the Resurrection and Holy Cross. The great feasts are on fixed days, whereas the feasts of lesser importance are in the main transferred to the nearest Sunday. "Herein," writes the historian, "we have a clear proof that the Armenian Church endeavours to diminish the number of days wherein no work is done!" This will come as no surprise to anybody who knows the industry and enterprise of the Armenians.

Ancient and modern Armenian are two different languages. To help the worshipper, service books are published with the two in parallel columns. A church of any size will be surrounded by a courtyard in which will be found the treasury, the priest's office, a room for meetings, and perhaps a school.

The parish clergy are married, and must get the consent of their wives before they are ordained. The monastic clergy are celibate. The parish clergy, because they are married, are thereby debarred from promotion to any high office in their Church unless they become widowers. It is thought by many that this deters men of ability from being ordained, no promotion being open to them beyond the rank of archpriest (senior priest of a parish). It is possible that there might be some reform in the future. At the present time the monastic clergy, however young, always

have precedence over the married parish clergy. There are two orders of "doctors", senior and junior, and each is entitled to carry a crozier surmounted by two or four serpents entwined.

But the most remarkable feature of the Armenian Church is the part played in the life of the Church by laymen. Nothing is done without their cooperation. The married priest is chosen by his parishioners. Six out of every seven members of a diocesan council may be laymen. A bishop, and even a catholicus, is elected by an assembly in which the laity are strongly represented.

Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus

The visitor to the Armenian Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem will see on a pillar in the main part the pictures of three Councils of the Church with dignitaries depicted in conference. These represent the three Councils of the Church recognized by the Armenian Church. She had always been inclined to the Alexandrian point of view and accepted readily the Ephesian formula of St. Cyril: "One nature of the Word Incarnate." She also recognized Nicaea and Constantinople. She repudiates the decisions of Chalcedon in 451, declaring that the Council was prompted by political motives and rivalries between the Patriarchates. Armenian scholars declare that it was the function of a Council to affirm a given truth and not to offer any explanation. The form or mode of the Incarnation, the union of humanity and divinity in Christ, is something which the human mind cannot authoritatively define.

In recent years, the Armenian Church has played her part in the Ecumenical Movement. Armenians were present at Lausanne 1927, Edinburgh 1937 and at Amsterdam 1948. It may fairly be said that the Armenian Church has followed the precept, "Unity in essentials, freedom in non-essentials, charity in all things," but an Armenian historian adds the comment that these are the words of a western divine of a Church which has forgotten his words!

Storm and tempest, oppression and persecution have been commonplaces in the history of the Church of Armenia. "In every city of the East I find a home," wrote Benjamin Disraeli about the Armenians, yet indeed dispersal and the danger of assimilation have been real perils. But the Church and the nation are one. The Armenian finds in the Church of his fathers a rallying point by which is preserved all that links him to his past. What concerns her concerns him.

The history of the Church, which is one long martyrology of which the bones in a chapel at Antelias are but a feeble symbol, is a story of God-given endurance. But perhaps better symbols are the Adj, the right arm of St. Gregory the Illuminator, a precious relic which stands for the continuity of the Church, and the place-name, Etchmiadzin. For

Etchmiadzin means "the Descent of the Only Begotten" and the name is a symbol of the Faith for which the martyrs died.

(Throughout this article the writer is deeply indebted to "The Church in Armenia", by Malachia Ormanian, formerly Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople, revised and edited by Bishop Terenig Poladian, published by Mowbray & Co., London.)

***The first year's courses of the new Sunday School curriculum are near release for the press. The curriculum, which comprises a four-year program for four age-groupings, is scheduled for use in January 1960.

***If there is sufficient interest, a Study Seminar in Islamics will again be held this summer in Jerusalem. The tentative dates are set for July 8-30. Those interested are asked to communicate directly and immediately with the Study Director.

***Plan now to attend the Christian Medical Conference, planned for representatives of Christian hospitals in Beirut, May 6th and 7th. Further information upon request to Dr. P. Manoogian, correspondent on Medical Work.

***A new information sheet, *The Word at Work*, has recently been issued by the Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature. It is aimed "for the crossroads, where literacy and literature workers meet."

....."We are an hungred....we are sick....we are naked...."

"How disgraceful it is, how desolate, how obscene, that in a world of plenty, a world of £8,000 motor cars, honey-blonde minks, and rock-and-roll dukes and debs, there should be such step-children of God as refugees."

Nicholas Monsarrat, author of *The Cruel Sea*
(as quoted in *Life and Work,* the Record of the Church of Scotland)

SAMUEL HABIB

LITERACY IN DEIR AL-BARSHA

****Samuel Habib, the correspondent on Rural Work, tells the story of the Literacy Campaign in Deir al-Barsha, where the Church became literate and strong.**

This is a great day in the village. It is the time for the ceremony of receiving certificates. Guests have come from nearby villages, and have gathered in the desert place, just outside of the parish house of the Evangelical Church in Deir al-Barsha. More than three thousand people are sitting on the sand awaiting the distribution of certificates to those who have passed their examinations.

The *hafla* starts with singing, prayer and devotions. Distinguished guests from Cairo line the platform of honor. Finally, an old man is called to the platform. He speaks:

"I am a new literate. Only four months ago, I started to learn reading and writing. And now listen to my reading."

With that, he reads a portion of the "Sermon on the Mount." Immediately following, a young man of 32 years comes to the platform, and begins to tell how he has read about the germs which live in the canal water.

"...Be careful not to walk with bare feet in the wet ground," he says, "for the Nile water is full of germs as well. We must use pump water for drinking and washing. This we have learned from the *Salih* books, and we are trying to practice what we have read."

Women also have a share. Here is a lady telling of her wonderful experiences with the *Salih* books. She has learned much about the harmful

effects of flies. She knows now how to keep her children clean. Another younger woman reads a portion from the seventh volume of *"The Life of Christ."* She tells how she came to know Christ, and committed herself to His service, through literacy work. This is a new experience for women. Some of them not only take the lead in women's projects, but for the first time dare to take a part in the big *"hafla"*, addressing the public.

Finally, the roll of graduates is called. Each new literate comes to the platform to receive his certificate. It is a great day in the life of the villager. He is full of self-confidence, since now he is able to read and write. Everyone receives some mention. Teachers also receive certificates and those who have attained to the grade of supervisor receive prizes in addition. This is the big moment, long awaited by all. It represents an investment of much time. The farmer of average intelligence requires four months to complete the first two stages of the course. The first stage consists of one book, *Al-Murshid,* ("The Guide.") This is the word-picture method, which puts much emphasis on the alphabet. The illiterate is taught that the *alif* is the ear of the rabbit. Since the Arabic word. "rabbit", begins with an *alif,* this can be easily memorized. Within one month, the average illiterate can complete the 51-page *Primer.*

The second stage of the reading course consists of five booklets of the *"Life of Salih"* and eight booklets of the *"Life of Christ." Salih* is a man who has learned how to read and write. Being literate, he has read useful books. Consequently he has worked hard to better both his home and village conditions. The booklets on the *"Life of Christ"* were written by Dr. Frank C. Laubach.

The third stage consists of about seventy booklets written in the limited vocabulary of the new literate, and including such titles as "Way of the Cross", "Care of Chickens," "How To Write Your Own Letter," etc.

At this *hafla,* nine hundred and twenty-eight have received certificates for the first stage. Deir al-Barsha has become a village with a new vision.

In every village where the Literacy Campaign works, literates are called to help their friends, the illiterates. This is their Christian service. They are asked to help the needy, imitating Jesus who dedicated His life for those who needed Him. In Deir al-Barsha, one hundred and fifty-one literates volunteered to help. During the first week of the campaign, these literates were instructed in the method of teaching the first book. These teachers are given very careful preparation. They also receive a special certificate at the conclusion of the course.

After three months of work, the best teachers are selected to be supervisors. These supervisors are trained well enough to be able to carry out the work when the directors and leaders of the campaign leave

ne village. Each supervisor receives a certificate, a Holy Bible, and is also given the opportunity to visit a religious conference, where he will get further experience to help him in leadership in the future.

Supervisors work under the leaders of the campaign for seven to nine months, since the campaign cannot allow more than twelve months of help to any one village. After this period, the supervisors have secured enough leadership training to enable them to direct programs in the local church. They become invaluable in the future running of the church.

To my astonishment, women in the villages prove to be wonderful leaders. In Deir al-Barsha, three women took the lead, and were appointed supervisors. One of them, Sa'ida by name, requested the opportunity to study nursing in order to help her village. She is now at the American Mission Hospital in Assiut, receiving her training in nursing. She has dedicated her life to the help of the sick of her village.

The *hafla* is not the end of the literacy program for the village. The new literates continue reading the literature which the Committee publishes for them. They commit themselves to daily Bible reading with their families, using "Devotional Meditations" planned to meet their daily needs.

Now for some statistics. Out of a population of 3800 in Deir al-Barsha, 1011 were enrolled in classes, 65% of all those eleven-years old and above who were able to be taught reading and writing. Within one year, 928 men and women completed the first course and a part of the second. 500 were able to finish all three courses.

Nothing stops the illiterates from coming to learn reading and writing. The unwilling are always 30-35% of the illiterates who are able to be taught and who are above 11 years of age. The others come willingly Their only motivation is to be able to read the Bible. In one village 25 men came by foot daily from a village more than two kilometers from the classes.

In Deir al-Barsha we had four classes. After taking the full census of the village, we drew a map, dividing the village into four quarters. In each section, one family offered one of its rooms for a classroom. Women met twice a day. Men met only in the evening. Teaching was not done only in classes. Wherever, and whenever, a teacher and a pupil met, they reviewed their lessons. You saw them reading in their houses, streets, shops, churches and farms.

Every evening, after the men's classes, the village came to church. They came by the hundreds. In the last two months of the campaign, the average attendence every evening was one thousand. This illustrates the glory of Christ's message. He healed the sick and the multitudes gathered around him to hear his teaching. Today, He is teaching the illiterates, and the masses come to worship Him in His Church.

The Executive Committee of the Near East Christian Council normally meets only once a year, reviewing and advancing at that time all the phases of the Council's work. On February third, fourth, and fifth, the Committee met in Cairo at All Saints Cathedral, where the meetings were held and where the members from out of town were hospitably housed. Four members were absent: Rev. Kenneth Cragg and Rev. Shafik Farah were prevented from coming by unavoidable contingencies; Rev. William Sage Woolworth and Mr. Willard Jones were in America on furlough and short leave respectively. The latter was replaced by Mr. Donald Mead, Acting Secretary for Refugee Work.

Rev. Adle Nakhosteen of Teheran, the Chairman, presided over the meetings. Present were the Vice-Chairman, Rev. Tawfik Gayyid of Cairo, Rev. Farid Audeh of Beirut, Rev. Donald MacNeill of Kuwait, Rev. Labib Mishriki of Cairo, and the secretaries, Rev. Harry Dorman, Mr. William Haddad, Mr. Habib Said, and Mr. Donald Mead. The Committee invited to sit with it also such delegates and committee members and correspondents of the Council as were available near Cairo. Among these were Miss Martha Roy, Mrs. Matilda Greiss, Miss Dorothy Blatter of Istanbul, (assisting the Literature Committee in Cairo and Beirut with art work), Rev. Ewing Bailey, Rev. Fahim Akhdary, Rev. Samuel Habib, Archdeacon Adib Shammas, Rev. Farid Mangarious, Rev. Ayyad Zakhary, and Rev. Tanios Zakhary.

Developments in the field of literature were presented by Mr. Said, who reported the progress in translation and publication of the *World Christian Books,* and the plans of the Christian Writers' Fellowship. Mr. Mead gave the recent developments in the refugee work. He was about to turn back the responsibility for general oversight to Mr. Jones, expected in Jerusalem within a few days, after his two months' leave. Mr.

Mead showed the first advance copies of the excellent new publication *Ten Years of Service* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) which tells of the work of the Refugee Committee since 1948. Dr. Akhdary explained the method of procedure of the Editorial Board for Sunday School Curriculum; the first lessons will be ready for use by the churches at the beginning of 1960. The report of the Radio Audio-Visual Committee emphasised the new series being broadcast during 1959 over Radio Liban on the lives of great men of history. There was discussion of the relation of the N.E.C.C. plan for a radio broadcasting station to the project of the Lutheran World Federation for a station in our area. The two bodies are keeping each other informed, and are considering possibilities of co-operation.

Reports from Dr. Cragg regarding the future of the Study Program were discussed. As Dr. Cragg completes in July the three year period of his assignment, there are uncertain elements in the way in which the Program should and could develop. More especially, it is not yet clear what responsibilities Dr. Cragg can accept in this area after the summer. The Committee recommended, in line with the plenary Assembly action in April of 1958, that the Program become associated with an established institution or institutions in Beirut for at least one semester of each year, with a summer school planned for a month or so in addition. This year, such a summer school will be held in Jerusalem, with Dr. Cragg in charge, as was done last year. The dates are July 8th to 30th (subject to revision) and further information will be coming along soon.

Provision was made for the absence of the Executive Secretary on furlough from July of 1959 to August of 1960. An invitation was extended to Mr. William Haddad to serve as Acting Executive Secretary, if the Bible Lands Union for Christian Education can release him for half-time service. Dr. Farid Mangarious of Luxor was invited to give what time he could as Acting Associate Secretary during the same period, with special responsibilities for visiting the churches in Egypt. Rev. James Willoughby of Beirut was invited to become Treasurer of the Council. Rev. Donald MacNeill will carry on as sole Editor of the NEWS BULLETIN.

The Committee spent the larger part of one day in discussing the integration of the I.M.C. and the W.C.C., especially in the light of Bishop Newbigin's challenging booklet *One Body, One Gospel, One World* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), and the particular questions which he raises in it. Committee members led the discussion on these various questions. Mr. Mead presented the special problems in our area that arise in the relationships of the N.E.C.C. to the Inter-Church Aid of the W.C.C.; some functions of Inter-Church Aid are carried out through our Committee on Refugee Work, while others proceed entirely independently up till now, with no reference to N.E.C.C. activities. Mr. Said discussed

the question of "unhealthy" support from abroad for an indigenous church, and pointed out the difference between support for an on-going church organization as such, (which is unhealthy), and the support for church institutions, which are in a sense luxuries and must often either have outside support or be abandoned altogether. Dr. Audeh took up the dangerous separation in the minds of many between "mission work" and "church work", and outlined a plan by which the theological students, the laymen, and the pastors should be trained to recognize the opportunities for witness that lie all about the church close at hand as well as the responsibilities for witness in lands adjacent.

Mr. Nakhosteen spoke of "partnership" as the answer to the question of relationships between "older" and "younger" churches in the future, but stressed that this concept must be enlarged to embrace the "ancient eastern" churches as well, whose "integrity must be respected." Mr. MacNeill discussed the opportunities that lie open to Christians who live abroad and who are not "professional" missionaries. The Christian fellowship in Kuwait is made up of many such, folk with a "short-term" assignment, or laymen in business who have a concern for Christian witness. Mr. Haddad took up the topic of church unity and church union as related to Christian witness in our area. He asked whether it is necessary for unity to come before effective witness, or vice-versa, and was inclined to think that the responsibility for achieving both must be seriously assumed at one and the same time.

The Committee stuck to business very responsibly for the three days, but had no evening meetings, and was entertained very hospitably at lunches and dinners, with opportunities to see many friends in the Cairo area.

Announcement was made of some of the visits of ecumenical personnel to the Near East in the coming months. Rev. J. A. Lovejoy, Secretary for the Near East of the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland, is visiting missions and churches in Lebanon and Jordan during March, and will be in Jerusalem for Easter. Dr. Emil Menzel, Secretary for the Near East of the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A. (taking the place of Dr. Roland Scott), will be in the Sudan at the end of March, and in Eritrea and Ethiopia during the first half of April. Then he will visit Aden, Bahrain, Kuwait and Iraq, and will be in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan early in May. After a few days in Turkey, he will leave about the fifteenth for Algeria, and then New York. Dr. Glora Wysner, I.M.C. Secretary for the Near East, will be at the Asmara Conference early in April, and will go on for a few days in Aden, but will not at this time be able to stay longer in our area. Other important personalities from east and west will be coming through during April, in connection

with the Asmara Conference, and the ceremonies of integration of the Syria-Lebanon Presbyterian Mission with the Synod of Syria and Lebanon about the middle of the month.

The Asmara meeting is a Study Conference on the Christian Faith and the Contemporary Eastern World. About one hundred will be in attendance, from April 1 to 9. Sponsored by the United Presbyterian Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, it will nevertheless include representatives of many other church and mission bodies in the Near East and Southern Asia. The representative of the N.E.C.C. will be the Executive Secretary. He will take the opportunity of spending some time in Ethiopia just previous to the Conference, visiting church and mission representatives and government officials in Addis Ababa.

ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

Course for Missionaries and Pastors

JULY 1—15 1959

The Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches (Chateau de Bossey, Celigny, Switzerland) has scheduled its Course for Missionaries and Pastors for July 1 — 15, 1959. It will be devoted to two questions:

(1) The meaning of the East Asian Conference for the Life and Mission of the Church, interpreted by Dr. D. T. Niles.

(2) The implications of Rapid Social Change for the Mission of the Church, interpreted by a number of experts who have been engaging in these studies in different parts of the world on behalf of the Rapid Social Change Study of the World Council of Churches.

The Institute is especially eager to have Asian participants and missionaries to Asia, and those working in other areas of rapid social change. Please contact the Ecumenical Institute at Chateau de Bossey for further information.

***Pictures are urgently required for the *Bulletin*. If you have black-and-white photographs (minimum size 3 by 5 inches) of your work, or some meeting of interest, please share them with us.

***If you are enjoying this issue of the *News-Bulletin*, please address an envelope right now to the Editors, N.E.C.C. *News-Bulletin*, P.O. Box 235, Beirut, Lebanon, and enclose a contribution, so that you may enjoy more in the future.

THE BOOK CORNER

Reviews and Notes

One Body, One Gospel, One World, by Lesslie Newbigin, (International Missionary Council, London, 1958.) 2s.

The newly elected General Secretary of the International Missionary Council discusses in this booklet, against the background of the proposed integration of the Council with the World Council of Churches, some of "the larger questions concerning the Church's faithfulness to its missionary calling." He discusses the new situation of Christian missions that has been created by the "profound change in the balance of cultural and political power" as between the east and the west, and also by the rise of the younger churches in "mission lands." This means neither that the age of missions is over, nor that we must get back to an earlier attitude toward mission work, but that we must seek to find out "what is the pattern for the Church's mission in the new day in which God has been pleased to put us." This pattern will include something of the ideas expressed in the phrase: "The whole Church, with one Gospel of reconciliation for the whole world."

A section entitled "The Unchanging Basis" shows how the mission of Christ and His Church is firmly based on biblical teaching and on the words of our Lord Himself. It is moreover the work of the Holy Spirit Himself, in which the Church participates wherever it is and however it can. Yet the mission concerns not only the "neighbor" near at hand, but the ends of the earth and the end of the world.

The latter part of the booklet speaks of principles for action today. In these pages are suggested problems and questions for further study. In the first place, it is shown that church and mission belong indissolubly together, that it is disastrous to think that the mission of the Church is to be discharged by what are called "Missions", and primarily by paid professionals. Perhaps in the future this mission will be discharged "by a multitude of anonymous non-professional Christians — merchants, travellers, soldiers, coolies, even beggars." Moreover, "the home base is everywhere", that is, it is the precious privilege of every church to be involved not only in the missionary task at its own door, but also in some other part of the total world-wide task.

Mission "in partnership" will have to discover the ways and means by which assistance can be given from church to church in the great task, in such a way that psychological harm and other unhealthy results may be avoided in the relations between wealthier and poorer churches. The difficulties in relating what has been called "mission work" to what has been called "inter-church

aid" are outlined, and some suggestions made for procedure here. The new role of the missionary is discussed, and the problems he is likely to face as a "fraternal worker" or a short-term worker.

The booklet moves to a climax as it shows how cooperation in mission must take its start in the local scene, moving from there to the regional and the global scene. But the author makes a strong plea for something more than cooperation, and claims that only in true unity must the Church make at last its undivided witness. "Cooperation in mission must eventually face the question 'Mission for what?' Into what are we inviting the men of all nations — into a new complex of divisions... or into the one family?... And we cannot face this question without going deep into the issues of faith and order that divide us."

The booklet has been circulated to member councils of the I.M.C. with the plea that it should be studied with special reference to the questions it raises, so that suggestions and comments may assist in the further discussion of the mission of the Church, as we move into a new era of the Church's expression of its mission and its unity.

H.G.D.Jr.

Ten Years of Service, by Christina H. Jones. Jerusalem: Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work, P.O.B. 195, Jerusalem, Jordan.

For years Christina Jones has been known in the Near East as much more than simply the wife of Mr. A. Willard Jones, Executive Secretary of the N.E.C.C. Refugee Committee. An active worker in the West Jordan area, she is the spirit that keeps the large Jerusalem clothing center going on an even keel.

From this inside position, Mrs. Jones is eminently qualified to present the record of Christian service to refugees in the Near East through the N.E.C.C. In her pamphlet, "Ten Years of Service," she recounts the development of this program from the day in 1948 when four men (including her husband) sent an appeal to the Christian churches of America, up to the present widespread and well-organized program operating in seven areas of the Middle East. She tells of the growing Christian concern for these unfortunate people which was expressed, in 1957, in a cash budget of $220,000, besides contributions in kind valued at over $1,750,000.

The pamphlet sets itself another task, which is equally important and equally well handled; this is the presentation of the background of the refugee situation. As a sensitive observer and, in many ways, a participant in the tragic events of 1947-48, Mrs. Jones is able to make clear to a propaganda-bewildered world that Christian concern not only compells us to help these people because they need help, but also because we feel that they have been tragically wronged. A true resolution of the problem is in the hands of the politicians; in the meantime, as Mrs. Jones makes clear, the Christian cannot turn his back.

A final section, which fills a carefully-created information vacuum, tells of what the Arab states are doing themselves to help their Palestinian brothers. There is also a brief discussion of the direction in which we must look to seek a solution to this problem.

A wide circulation and careful attention to this pamphlet in both the Middle East and the West would do a great deal to lead us to understand the position of the Christian—and that of all honest men—on the Palestine question.

D.C.Mead.

Christianity Among the Religions of the World, by Arnold Toynbee. (London: Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.)

The very name of the author will cause this book to be read by countless numbers of people, who might not otherwise enter into such realms of thought. Toynbee writes neither as missionary nor yet as theologian, but his historical inquisitiveness will produce many germinal

thoughts that cause us to re-examine the meaning of the words we use. To state one among many: he urges us to forget about the "uniqueness" of Christianity. Is this what contributes to the intolerance of Christians? he asks. As many another in our day, he quotes the comment of a pagan philosopher to St. Ambrose: "It is impossible that so great a mystery should be approached by one road only." His comments and words are echoed by many in our time, and the stimulation of this short volume will inevitably produce fruit in discussions of this question, in the Near East.

—D.R.M.

Al-Massih, Eissa Ibn Mariam, by Abdul-Hamid Joda Al-Sahhar. (Cairo: The Story Club, Yusuf Al-Sibaii, Chairman, January 1959)

One of the remarkable facets of Christian literature of this century is that the life of Christ is written by Muslims, and consequently widely read in the Arabic world.

Recently, a 256-page book on the life of Christ was written by Abdul-Hamid Joda Al-Sahhar. It is "Al-Massih, Eissa Ibn Mariam (The Christ, Eissa, the Son of Mary)".

This widely circulated book is one of the most wonderful dramatic biographies! It tells the reader the full life of Christ, quoting from the Bible and the Qura'n. The drama starts with Jesus as a miracle baby, who held the attention of the people by his amazing miracles. He spoke in the manger telling the Jews who he was. He made birds out of mud, to let the people believe that he was sent by God. Whenever his miracles are mentioned, the author says that the miracle happened by the permission of God.

The author proceeds telling us how the Hero visited the villages and cities, healing the sick, serving the needy, and preaching the Kingdom of God. Then he illustrates for us the Bible story of the suffering prophet, and how the Jewish leaders acted with hatred.

A successful drama would present a hero who suffers, but overcomes the difficulties, and survives in the end. The author tells the full Bible story of the sufferings of Jesus. At the crucial point of crucifixion, the Hero disappears by a miracle. The Romans, to please the Jews, crucified Judas Iscariot. Here, the drama succeeded in judging the evil-doer.

The disciples had to steal Judas' body from the tomb, to let the people believe that the story of crucifixion is true!

This drama is reasonable, isn't it ? It is not easy for the human mind to believe in the crucifixion of Jesus, and its meaning.

The way the author mixed the Bible and Qur'an stories is remarkable. Whenever the two stories do not agree, he quotes the Qur'an only. In quoting the Bible, he changes the wording of a few verses, to fit the Muslim story or theology. He said that Jesus said that He was the Son of God, but He really did not mean it. Jesus washed the hands of the disciples, not their feet. Martha's sister was Mary Magdalene!

It is also remarkable that he quotes Jesus' teachings about prayer, and divorce, and most parts of the Sermon on the Mount. But he neglects Jesus' teaching about love, especially loving the enemy.

This book is a result of careful study of the Bible, though it lacks some true historical facts. It shows a certain belief in the sufferings of Jesus, and progress in thinking of the Gospel story. The cover picture is illustrated by a Muslim; it is the head of Christ, crowned by thorns.

—Samuel Habib

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"Let him who cannot be alone beware of community;
Let him who is not in community beware of being alone."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Correspondents and Committees

Advance Program	The Rev. Farid Audeh P.O. Box 235, Beirut, Lebanon
Education	Miss Martha Roy 198, Sh. Ramses, Cairo, Egypt
Evangelism	The Rev. Erik Stidsen Crater, Aden, South Arabia
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The Near East Christian Council

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	26 Sharia Gala, Cairo, Egypt
Refugee Relief Secretary	Mr. A. Willard Jones
	P.O. Box 195, Jerusalem, Jordan
Study Program Director	The Rev. Canon A. K. Cragg
	P.O. Box 18, Jerusalem, Jordan

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The Near East Christian Council is made up of four regional councils: The Church Council of Iran; the Egypt Inter-Mission Council; the North Sudan Christian Council, and the United Christian Council of South-west Asia (for Syria, Lebanon and Jordan). In these regions and in other countries, church bodies and missionary societies are also members of the Council.

The Near East Christian Council is an organization that seeks to make effective cooperation and witness of the churches in an area extending from Morocco and Algeria to Iran and Arabia, from Turkey to the Sudan and Ethiopia.